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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5944th meeting

Friday, 25 July 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bui The Giang	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2008/458)

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08-43933 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2008/458)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Serbia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Jeremić (Serbia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Zannier to take a seat at the Council table.

As this is Mr. Zannier's first briefing to the Security Council, I should like, on behalf of the Council, to congratulate him on his appointment and to wish him all the best in his new assignment.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Skender Hyseni.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Hyseni to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/458, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Zannier: Since my predecessor addressed you on 21 April, the situation in Kosovo has changed fundamentally. The Secretary-General's special report on Kosovo (S/2008/354), discussed by the Security Council on 20 June (see S/PV.5917), demonstrates that events on the ground have contributed to creating a profoundly new operating reality for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The report before the Council today (S/2008/458) describes in further detail UNMIK's activities during the period 1 March to 25 June 2008.

Considering that the latter report covers only very marginally my period in office — as I took up my duties in Pristina as new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for UNMIK on 20 June — I would like to supplement it with my own assessment of the developments on the ground since my arrival in Kosovo.

During the reporting period, the ability of UNMIK to perform the vast majority of its tasks as an interim administration has been fundamentally challenged, owing to actions taken by the authorities in Pristina and by the Kosovo Serbs.

As my predecessor reported previously, the Kosovo Assembly adopted on 9 April what it described as the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. This act came into force on 15 June. Since then, the Kosovo authorities continue to seek to assume the powers and

responsibilities of a sovereign State. For example, the Kosovo Assembly recently approved an allocation of funds for the establishment of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a minister has been appointed and is present here today. The Prime Minister has also announced his intention to establish embassies in a number of European States and in Washington, D.C. The Assembly of Kosovo continues to pass legislation, which is now promulgated by the President of Kosovo without reference to my powers under Security Council 1244 (1999) or the constitutional framework.

Kosovo Serbs have, on the other hand, continued to oppose cooperation with the Prishtinë/Pristina authorities, stressing that they will cooperate only with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). At the same time, the Serbian Government has consolidated its control of structures in Serb-majority areas, particularly in northern Kosovo. On 11 May, local municipal elections were held in 23 out of the 30 municipalities in Kosovo in which Kosovo Serbs live. UNMIK neither hindered nor supported the elections and declared the results invalid. As a result of the Serbian local elections, new parallel municipal authorities are now operating in all Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, and the Serbian Minister for Kosovo has noted publicly his expectation that UNMIK will eventually recognize them. Recently, the Serbian Government also sanctioned the formation of an Assembly of the Union of Serbian Municipalities and Settlements in Kosovo and Metohija, on the basis of the results of these elections.

As a consequence of this stark divergence of paths taken by Kosovo's Serbian and Albanian communities, the space in which UNMIK can operate has changed. Since the entry into force of the Kosovo Constitution, exercising my legal powers under resolution 1244 (1999) has become increasingly difficult in practice. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I am not in a position any longer to promulgate legislation that has an undisputed binding effect. Attempts to impose my legal authority are simply not heeded by the Kosovo Albanian majority, which now sees the Constitution of Kosovo as the fundamental document from which legal authority derives.

Moreover, the relationship between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Prime Minister has altered significantly. Regular working meetings to decide on key governance matters — a standing fixture since the inception of UNMIK — no longer take place.

While I and my staff continue to monitor the work of the Kosovo authorities and to mediate and facilitate in disputes between communities, my power to impose solutions has in practice disappeared throughout much of the territory. While I am still formally vested with executive authority under resolution 1244, I have no tools to enforce such authority. Therefore, these powers can only be exercised if and when they are accepted by all parties, as is the case, for instance, in the rule of law area.

Consent to direct administration by UNMIK has disappeared in the majority areas and is greatly diminished in practice; it has also disappeared in areas inhabited by minority communities, regardless of claims that resolution 1244 (1999) is being upheld. Recent local-level disputes demonstrate the more complicated situation which now prevails for the international community as it attempts to resolve them. These disputes have included disagreement over the siting of a new mosque in the Kamenica municipality, a water distribution dispute in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and a complaint by the Serbian Orthodox Church about actions taken by the Gjakovë/Djakovica municipality in covering over the foundations of a destroyed church to make a public park.

While UNMIK has monitored these situations and sought to facilitate dialogue between the communities, the Kosovo Serbs deal only with UNMIK and Kosovo Albanians prefer either to attempt to deal with such issues themselves or involve the European Union or other representatives of the international community and it is becoming increasingly difficult for UNMIK to broker solutions. Nevertheless, in areas where ethnic minority issues are more strongly felt, UNMIK effectively remains the only actor that can attempt to mediate between both sides in practical disputes.

In addition, the decision of the European Union to end funding for the operations of UNMIK's economic reconstruction pillar has left UNMIK as from 30 June without the technical capacity or budget to operate in most economic areas, which is a further factor that is forcing UNMIK to reassess its ability to carry on as before.

With respect to the rule of law, like my predecessors, I am concerned that key institutions are

not functioning as they should. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, a number of judicial institutions in northern Kosovo remain closed. Large numbers of Kosovo-Serb police officers, who refuse to work within and take instruction from the leadership of the Kosovo Police Service, continue to be suspended with pay. UNMIK Customs has no presence at the two northern gates on the Administrative Boundary Line with Serbia, with the resulting loss of revenues and increases in smuggling.

As a result of this situation, UNMIK has been engaged in planning for a reconfiguration of its presence that takes into account these circumstances and refocuses its operations, so as to maximize the value it can add in the areas where its role remains key. The planning has been based on the instructions of the Secretary-General and maintains a strictly status-neutral posture, in full compliance with the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

An initial reconfiguration plan has been developed and forwarded to Headquarters outlining a number of measures that will reduce UNMIK's capacity in areas where it can no longer effectively function, for example, in civil administration, and enhancing it in others, with particular attention to minorities. For example, I am particularly conscious of the ongoing need to ensure that the rights of all communities in Kosovo are fully protected.

In the area of external relations, UNMIK is willing and able to continue assisting with Kosovo's participation in international forums, in line with the requests from the inviting organizations, thus ensuring that the people of Kosovo can fully benefit from interaction with the international community and with regional cooperation processes.

In principle, UNMIK continues to retain executive authority for rule of law functions, such as the police, judiciary and customs, throughout Kosovo for the time being. Discussions on future cooperation have taken place with representatives of the European Union's Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) at the technical level. We are close to concluding an agreement encompassing, inter alia, areas such as transfer of assets, privileges and immunities of staff, and exchanges of information. We expect the European Union Rule of Law Mission to be deployed and operate under United Nations authority and in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

In addition, I expect the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Kosovo to continue its work as part of the reconfigured UNMIK. This will be crucial for the promotion of democratic values and the protection of all community interests. In fact, as a part of UNMIK's reconfiguration, the role of OSCE as an UNMIK pillar will be enhanced, particularly at the field level. For this reason, I expect a closer interaction with OSCE in future.

NATO has also expressed its continuing commitment to support both the people of Kosovo and the international civil presence in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). I am most encouraged by the level of constructive cooperation between UNMIK and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) on the ground. This is essential for safeguarding peace and stability in the region.

A key continuing role for UNMIK will be to lead the process of dialogue with Belgrade and to consult with all affected parties in a number of practical areas. It is my firm belief that every effort must be made to keep open all available channels for constructive dialogue and cooperation. Since my arrival in Kosovo, I have held discussions with a number of local interlocutors, undertaking several field trips and meetings, at which I have been able to talk to representatives of most political groups and communities. In the last two weeks, I have met with political leaders in the north, judicial officials in both Prishtinë/Pristina and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Deçan/Decani.

Just two days ago, on my way to New York, I had an initial meeting with the new Government of Serbia in Belgrade on organizing dialogue in the six practical areas of mutual concern outlined by the Secretary-General in his 12 June letter to President Tadić: customs, police, courts, transportation and infrastructure, boundaries and Serbian patrimony. I am very encouraged by the expressed willingness of Foreign Minister Jeremić to engage in fruitful, constructive dialogue. I consider that to be a promising beginning to the dialogue with Belgrade, which will continue next week with a meeting with Serbia's Minister for Kosovo, Mr. Goran Bogdanovic, in Pristina.

That process will require the consultation and support of all interested parties. I consider my role in

that regard as that of a facilitator for eventual direct dialogue between the parties. I intend to engage in the process in good faith, in a spirit of transparency and openness, with the aim of promoting the resolution of outstanding issues within a realistic timeframe and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

In conclusion, let me express my hope and trust that the path we have taken to ensure the continued relevance and effectiveness of UNMIK will allow the United Nations to protect its legacy in Kosovo, while adapting itself to the circumstances and maintaining the monitoring and mediating capacity that is still essential, in full cooperation with the other international actors.

I am also optimistic that UNMIK can continue to have an important role in facilitating dialogue among the different parties on matters affecting the lives of all communities in Kosovo.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić.

Mr. Jeremić (Serbia): Thank you, Sir, for convening this session of the Security Council.

Since our last meeting devoted to Serbia's southern province of Kosovo, a new Government in Belgrade has been confirmed by our National Assembly. It represents a more hopeful Serbia, confident in its engagement with the world; ready to accelerate our progress towards full European Union (EU) membership; willing actively to contribute to building up regional peace; and firmly committed to safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.

In other words, it represents a Serbia that is a proud, European democracy, whose well-known position on the unilateral declaration of independence of our southern province remains unchanged. We continue to hold that its attempt at secession contravenes the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and other cornerstone treaties of the contemporary international and European order.

We maintain that the unilateral declaration of independence has also brought the explicit meaning of resolution 1244 (1999) into serious question, as the resolution clearly places a binding, Chapter VII obligation on all Member States to respect the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of my country.

A great majority of the Organization's 192 Member States have continued to abide by those principles. On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, I want to express my profound appreciation to them for their commitment to their strict commitment to the rule of international law and clearly state my country's unbroken dedication to those same precepts.

Questioning the principle of sovereignty anywhere in the world is a dangerous game, fraught with precedent and political consequence. As a result, international law and the strategic priorities of our region are in danger of being sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. As a result, we find ourselves facing a perilous impasse today.

Serbia cannot accept, and will continue to oppose, its own forcible partition. I strongly believe that no country represented in this room would do otherwise. I do not think there can be any serious doubt about that. I want to emphasize something else about which there should be no doubt: the Republic of Serbia believes that meeting coming together in compromise is the sine qua non of a more profoundly integrated Europe and a more prosperous, interdependent world.

We believe in the peaceful and consensual resolution of world disputes, including the one that we are here to discuss today. Such an approach is the only one that stands a chance of achieving a sustainable solution to Kosovo acceptable to all stakeholders.

With that in mind, I now turn to the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in our province of Kosovo, dated 15 July 2008 (S/2008/458).

I notice that its overall tone has improved over previous ones in the sense that the criticism of the Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade has subsided — a welcome development. Yet, I must express regret at the report's tendency to downplay the fundamental distinction between positions that aim to uphold the primacy of the rule of international law and those that aim to sidestep its basic tenets.

I also regret that the United Nations has still not released the findings reached by Mr. Ssekandi on allegations that senior officials of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) ordered the use of excessive force on 17 March of this year against Kosovo Serb demonstrators in the town of

Kosovska Mitrovica, as is plain from paragraph 7 of the report.

In addition, I must highlight the fact that nowhere does the Secretary-General's report explicitly condemn the illegitimate adoption of a constitution by the Kosovo Albanian authorities, a document that attempts to eliminate any role or function of the United Nations in our southern province. That so-called constitution makes reference to implementing the Ahtisaari Proposal, a document that has no legal standing in the Security Council, much less in the Republic of Serbia.

We are facing a grave violation of resolution 1244 (1999). That fact should have been addressed directly. Instead, the report merely asserts the existence of a "profoundly new reality in which UNMIK can no longer perform ... its tasks as an interim administration".

Turning to a more general point, I must also regretfully contrast the passive approach of the United Nations on the question of defending its executive authority mandated by the Council with its activism on the matter of reconfiguration. Proceeding without the Council's consent and against the clearly communicated position of the Republic of Serbia, the host-country of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, the Secretary-General had instructed his Special Representative to start reconfiguring UNMIK.

The argument that was made to justify that encroachment on the statutory prerogatives of the Security Council was one of expediency: the Council could not agree, but it was necessary to move forward anyway. Imagine what could happen if some place other than Kosovo is at issue in this Chamber — one in which a different constellation of forces and interests is in play. Would it again be appropriate to move ahead without the Council's approval?

The way in which reconfiguration started was, in our opinion, an inglorious episode indeed. But what is now of crucial importance is for it to proceed in the right way —with the full engagement of Serbia. It must be completed with our acceptance and explicitly approved by the Security Council. That is the only way to deliver legitimacy and ensure sustainability of our work.

With cautious optimism, I can say that my meeting with the Secretary-General last week produced an understanding that could hopefully lead to an eventual agreement — one that would require, in the end, approval of the Council. The voice of Serbia on reconfiguration, and much else besides, should no longer be avoided or disregarded.

Two days ago, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Lamberto Zannier travelled to Belgrade for talks on the six topics of practical mutual concern, in the language of the Report: namely, the police, judiciary, customs, transportation and infrastructure, boundaries and patrimony. That first meeting was an important first step toward protecting the well-being of Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General remarked to me, — and I will use his words — "to solve problems together we must reach decisions together". We fully agree. So, it is in that constructive frame of mind that my colleague, Minister for Kosovo Mr. Goran Bogdanovic, will meet with Mr. Zannier early next week for talks on the judiciary and police in Serb-dominated areas. The hard work of arriving at a compromise is about to begin.

I want to be clear in saying that Serbia will spare no effort honestly to engage with the United Nations in forging an acceptable, forward-looking reconfiguration arrangement, one that upholds the overall authority of the United Nations, while opening up space for the institutional inclusion of key regional organizations.

I must be equally clear in saying that reconfiguration must not go beyond the red lines marked out by resolution 1244 (1999). It must not in any way infringe upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. Once explicitly confirmed by the Security Council, such a construction could go far in the direction of addressing the very concrete and numerous challenges that the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in Kosovo currently face.

Today, the situation on the ground is, unfortunately, far from normal. I will limit myself to citing three examples.

First, after the unilateral declaration of independence, even fewer internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to Kosovo than before — a total of only 49 Kosovo Serbs from March to the end of June, according to the Secretary-General's report. That

clearly demonstrates the undercurrent of exclusion and intolerance that permeates the province.

Secondly, following the unilateral declaration of independence, cultural cleansing has returned. We have witnessed the abominable act of paving over the ruins of the recently destroyed Serbian church in the centre of Djakovica, which compounded the physical destruction with an attempt to erase every trace of its very existence. We have also seen the defiance of the municipal authorities in Decane in refusing to restore the cadastral record of land belonging to the monastery of Viskoi Decani — a UNESCO World Heritage Site that has been rightly placed on its List of World Heritage in Danger — notwithstanding two executive decisions of the Special Representative ordering them to do so.

Thirdly, since the unilateral declaration of independence, the return of illegally-seized private property has come to a standstill. More than 30,000 such cases are outstanding. Those affected — Kosovo Serbs, overwhelmingly — barely manage in makeshift dwellings or IDP camps, while Kosovo Albanians continue to live in their homes and make use of their agricultural fields without fear of arrest or prosecution.

In short, life for the most troubled community in Europe is almost unbearable. For many living in enclaves, their fate depends on how they feel they can survive despite the hostility of their immediate surroundings. For others, we are talking about a community that is practically inseparable from the rest of Serbia. False frontiers can create flashpoints, and so can attempts at imposing so-called reality. We must be very frank about that.

The only prosperous destiny for the western Balkans manifestly lies in the European Union. Serbia is very serious about rapidly securing its membership in the EU. We have unmistakably demonstrated that fundamental commitment in recent days by taking decisive steps taken to reaffirm our full cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague.

Serbia strongly believes in the power of the twenty-first century values of Europe and their ability to reconcile former adversaries. Consistent with those beliefs, I say that it is time to turn the page on the divisions of the recent past. By pursuing a policy of peace through compromise, the western Balkans can truly be transformed into a region that submits to the rule of law while embracing the promise of Europe and the principles that stand at its foundation. I see the present as a historic moment as important for us as it is for the European Union. Together, we can create a region that looks to the future with optimism, proud of its many identities and secure of its prospects. Such is the vision of the new Government of Serbia. That is the true new reality we aim to achieve, together with our partners and friends, and the strategic framework informing our approach to resolving the problem of Kosovo.

In conclusion, we hope that all in this Chamber agree that a step in the right direction is making reconfiguration acceptable to all parties present here, starting with the Republic of Serbia. We intend to play our constructive part without shying away from exercising our right peacefully to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with international law. By aiming to unite people and not States — to use the formulation of Jean Monet, one of the founding fathers of the European Union — we can move that issue forward in concert. Together, we can find a way back to our common home and ahead to our common future.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Skender Hyseni.

Mr. Hyseni: It is an honour to address the Security Council at this point in time, almost six months after Kosovo became an independent State. The Security Council has played an important role in every stage of post-war developments in Kosovo. It is therefore my pleasure to speak here today about the progress made in Kosovo after independence, especially in the wake of the entry into force of Kosovo's new Constitution on 15 June.

As members of the Council know, we declared our independence in February in line with the provisions and recommendations of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy Marti Ahtisaari. The Comprehensive Proposal of President Ahtisaari has been endorsed by the Parliament of Kosovo and the Government has put together plans to implement it in its entirety.

So far, 43 States around the world, including most of the countries in our region of Europe, have recognized our independence. Many of them have generously offered us their support in building a stable, multiethnic and democratic State and society. We

expect many other countries to recognize Kosovo as an independent State in the months ahead.

We are aware that independence has not solved many problems my country faces. Kosovo still has significant work to do to repair its devastated economy, which was mismanaged for decades and systematically destroyed by the Milosevic regime. The youngest State in the world is in desperate need of investment from abroad and economic development.

To that end, I am happy to report that the recent donor conference on Kosovo was a great success. The donor community has generously pledged over €1.2 billion to support Kosovo's economic recovery and development. I take this opportunity to extend our deepest appreciation to all donor nations. Likewise, I wish to reiterate the firm commitment of the Government of Kosovo to full transparency and accountability as we work with our donor partners to implement various projects.

In recent weeks, Kosovo has taken major steps towards becoming a more just and democratic State. The new democratic Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, which entered into force on 15 June, is an excellent example of a modern constitution that reflects the highest international standards on human and minority rights. That foundational document was prepared with the help of international experts and incorporates minority-rights protections from the Ahtisaari plan, and the people of Kosovo are very proud of it.

Also on 15 June, over 40 pieces of legislation from the Ahtisaari Proposal entered into force. Those laws cover such crucial areas as the decentralization of local Government and the protection of minority rights and of cultural and religious heritage. Both the new constitution and the entry into force of those laws create basic prerequisites to implement the Ahtisaari plan in its entirety.

Beyond just adopting legislation, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has already embarked upon on-the-ground implementation of the Ahtisaari plan. For example, plans for the establishment of protective zones around Serbian Orthodox sites and for the decentralization of local governance — namely, for the establishment of new Serb-majority municipalities — are already under way.

Reconciliation among our communities is a standing priority of the Kosovo institutions. The President is in the process of establishing within his office a community consultative council, and the Prime Minister of Kosovo has already established a special office within his Cabinet for outreach to the minority ethnic communities.

Reconciliation goals are being best served also by our multi-ethnic coalition Government. The Kosovo Government has two ministers from the Serb community and one from the Turkish community and a number of deputy ministers from minority communities.

As members of the Council know, after the declaration of independence, Kosovo welcomed and invited the European Union and NATO to perform functions in Kosovo. The establishment of the International Civilian Office to supervise the implementation of the Ahtisaari plan and the deployment of a European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX Kosovo) to help us in the police and justice sectors have been widely appreciated in Kosovo. Although there have been isolated violent challenges by certain illegal structures in the north of Kosovo, including attacks which resulted in the tragic death of a United Nations police officer, the overall situation has remained calm and orderly, and that has helped us make a smooth transition to the new status.

In response to the new situation in Kosovo, the Secretary-General took the initiative to reconfigure the United Nations presence in our country. The President of the Republic of Kosovo, His Excellency Mr. Fatmir Sejdiu, wrote to the Secretary-General on 16 June 2008 to express his appreciation of that initiative. In line with that, we will continue to work closely with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, as reconfiguration moves ahead. We understand that the United Nations will continue to perform rule of law functions, for a limited period of time, until the European Union becomes fully operational throughout Kosovo. We look forward to working with EULEX, and we firmly believe that its deployment throughout Kosovo can only help security and stability in Kosovo and in the region.

Let me take a moment here to express our gratitude to all the men and women of the United Nation Mission in Kosovo for their good work and for

helping us rebuild our devastated country and shattered society over the past nine years.

Kosovo will continue to hold out a hand of friendship and cooperation to Serbia. We will not withdraw the strong commitments to friendship and cooperation with Belgrade and with all of our neighbours. As we have stated so many times before, Kosovo and Serbia are linked by ties of geography, infrastructure, trade, culture, et cetera. We will continue to insist upon and to seek normalization of relations with our neighbour to the north, based on shared values and common interests. We will continue to react with restraint, moderation and goodwill, believing this to be the only way towards the establishment of a democratic, multi-ethnic State, where there is room and opportunity for all and whose future lies squarely on the path to European integration. Ultimately, both our countries share the desire for a brighter future in the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies.

Pristina is ready to engage in discussions with Belgrade, as two independent States, on a wide range of practical issues of mutual interest. The Secretary-General has likewise proposed that each country discuss with the United Nations a number of practical arrangements. As President Sejdiu stated in his address to the Council on 20 June (see S/PV.5917), we are open to this dialogue. We, of course, have taken very seriously the Secretary-General's commitment to consult with us, as no arrangements can be viable without the full participation and approval of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo.

Finally, I wish to underline Kosovo's strong commitment to becoming a full and contributing member of the international community. We will seek full membership and participation in each and every regional and international structure and initiative, in line with our strong desire for good-neighbourly relations. Close cooperation among countries is an indispensable prerequisite for the early admission of our countries to the European Union family of democracies and the wider community of nations. In the twenty-first century, no country should be forced into unwanted isolation. The Republic of Kosovo looks forward to working with all of the members of the Council to promote our shared goals of international peace and security.

In conclusion I wish to once again express our gratitude for the opportunity to present the views of Kosovo.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to welcome among us Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Skender Hyseni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo. I wish also to welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to assure him of our full support. I take this opportunity also to express Belgium's great appreciation for the outstanding work of Mr. Zannier's predecessor, Mr. Joachim Rücker, in circumstances that were often difficult.

During the period covered in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/458), the situation on the ground has changed considerably. Our debate on 20 June (see S/PV.5917) provided an opportunity to consider some aspects of the situation, but I wish to stress a number of additional points.

First of all, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, the 15 June entry into force of the Kosovo Constitution and the legislative work under way in a variety of areas including decentralization and the establishment of a ministry of foreign affairs have created a profoundly new reality. In deciding to reconfigure the United Nations presence to match that new reality, the Secretary-General showed realism and a sense of responsibility. As my delegation stressed last month, it is important that the technical reconfiguration take place without delay so that the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX Kosovo) can play its proper role throughout Kosovo and to the benefit of all Kosovo citizens.

The importance of the international presence on the ground should not blind us to the significant challenges that remain in Kosovo, which are clearly described in the most recent report of the Secretary-General. Maintaining stability and security on the ground remains a very high priority. A safe and secure environment is a precondition for the establishment of the rule of law and democratic institutions in which all of Kosovo's people, including members of minorities, can participate: that is a second key objective. Finally, security and the rule of law are also preconditions for sustained economic development, which is a third important priority. In that context, we welcome the

success of the donor conference held in Brussels on 11 July.

In all those areas, the primary responsibility rests with the Kosovo authorities, who now have the tools to attain those objectives. I take the opportunity of Mr. Hyseni's presence to encourage the Kosovo authorities to continue and, in particular, to intensify their efforts in that regard. Much remains to be done, as the Secretary-General's report indicates.

However, let us not forget that Belgrade also has a role to play. Belgium continues to be concerned at the creation of parallel institutions in Serb-dominated areas. We are particularly disquieted by the intention to create a Serb parliament in Kosovo. We encourage Belgrade to promote a constructive policy of good-neighbourliness towards Kosovo. It goes without saying that a good working relationship is in the interest of both countries and, it must be stressed, that of the entire region. It is time to close a painful chapter in the history of the Balkans and to begin to write a new chapter — one oriented towards the future.

Four days ago, the new Serb Government, by arresting Radovan Karadzic, demonstrated clearly and unequivocally its will to make an active contribution to that end. Belgium warmly congratulates the Serb authorities on that important step and encourages them to continue on that path by arresting the two remaining fugitives, Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic. By doing so, Serbia would prove its full commitment to the European values of justice and peace.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): We should like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Skender Hyseni of Kosovo, and to thank them for kindly enlightening us on the current situation in Kosovo. We also wish to thank Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who gave us an excellent briefing on the issue. We congratulate him on his appointment and wish him every success in his new duties. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for the work accomplished.

After having listened very closely to all the information provided to us, we must note that the situation on the ground in Kosovo continues to be worrisome. Indeed, many political and security difficulties remain on the agenda and continue to be sources of great concern, including the Kosovo Serbs' boycott of the institutions of the new State and the establishment by the Kosovo Serbs of parallel administrative structures, despite the entry into force of Kosovo's Constitution.

The 11 May 2008 holding by the northern Serbs of parliamentary and municipal elections, whose results have, moreover, been invalidated by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), have contributed to this situation and have further exacerbated the tensions among Kosovo's communities.

Another source of great concern in the area of security is the trafficking and illegal possession of a large amount of weapons in the country. That poses a strong challenge to the Security Council to remain vigilant and to devote the closest possible attention to those signs, which are harbingers of a potential conflict — particularly in the northern part of Kosovo, where there seem to be hints of partition.

Given such a context, we think that the Secretary-General's proposals, presented to the Council on 20 June (see S/PV.5917) and aimed at changing, within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), the structure and profile of UNMIK and some operational aspects of the international civil presence in the new State, are courageous and realistic and deserve particular attention by the Council.

However, from an analysis of the situation, we note a certain ambiguity: on the one hand, the Kosovo authorities' acceptance of the continued United Nations presence in Kosovo and, on the other, a real will to fully take charge of their destiny as a free and sovereign State. Hence, the absence of any reference to the United Nations in the Constitution, which entered into force on 15 June 2008.

That being the case, we understand the imperatives imposed by the new situation and continue to believe that the Secretary-General's proposals, mentioned previously, could provide a just and equitable alternative, in that they preserve UNMIK's many achievements while guaranteeing the stability and peace of Kosovo and the region.

We commend the efforts of the Government of Kosovo to promote good governance and the rule of law. In particular, we have taken good note of the progress made in implementing the standards for Kosovo. In that regard, we urge the international

community and, in particular, the European Union (EU) to support the programme for Kosovo's development, including within the framework of the new action plan for a European partnership agreed upon with the European Union.

Despite the persistence of tensions between Pristina and Belgrade, there is no doubt as to their common European destiny. Therefore, we welcome Serbia's initiative to postpone its decision to close its diplomatic missions in certain EU States, as well as its efforts to facilitate the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU.

It is important to continue to support Kosovo, because there remain many challenges, which can be met only with help from everyone, in particular the international community, UNMIK, the International Security Force in Kosovo and the EU. We reiterate our appeal to all the parties and to the entire international community to cooperate with the Secretary-General within the framework of his new approach for Kosovo.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Skender Hyseni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, for their presence at this meeting. We listened to both of them very attentively. I should like to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his appointment as Foreign Minister in the new Government. My delegation also wishes to welcome, for the first time since his appointment as Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo. We welcome the impartial and pragmatic approach that he just described to us and his resolve to cooperate actively in this new phase with the other international actors present in Kosovo, in particular the European Union. I wish to assure him that he enjoys France's full support in carrying out his mission.

Like all other members of the Security Council, we are resolved to do our utmost to ensure that the new era that is beginning in the lives of the people of Kosovo will contribute to a definitive restoration of peace and stability throughout the Western Balkans.

Following our meeting on 20 June (see S/PV.5719), the Secretary-General launched the reconfiguration of the international civil presence within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999). He acted both before and after that decision in a spirit of transparency and dialogue, and he demonstrated an irreproachable concern for impartiality regarding the mandate entrusted to him by the Security Council.

A month after that decision, we see a security situation that remains calm and institutions that are working satisfactorily within a democratic framework.

Above all, the decision of the Secretary-General to reconfigure the international presence has helped to uphold a favourable climate for its ongoing stabilizing action throughout Kosovo. It has thus enabled it to carry out the vital tasks set by the Secretary-General, namely the maintenance of stability and security and the preservation of all that has been achieved by UNMIK over nine years.

In the coming period, UNMIK may rely on the full support of the European Union. In particular, the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) is to be fully operational by autumn and is gradually taking on a larger operational role, within the framework set by the Secretary-General. As Mr. Javier Solana, European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, has recently said, EULEX operates in the framework of resolution 1244 (1999) and under the overall authority of the United Nations and with full transparency with regard to the Organization.

We have just heard the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Kosovo, who have set forth differing views on, in particular, the question of the independence of Kosovo. Nevertheless, we note with satisfaction their shared concern for approaching these differences in a spirit of stability and in a spirit of preserving the conditions of a shared future within the framework of the European Union. Without the sense of responsibility being expressed by the peoples of Kosovo and Serbia and their leaders, and without the determination of the vast majority to resolve disputes between communities through dialogue and without resort to force and violence, nothing will be possible. The commitment to the rule of law, the determination to build a multi-ethnic State with respect for minorities, the will to form friendly relations with the neighbours of Kosovo and pro-European undertakings by the Kosovar authorities, as reaffirmed today by Mr. Hyseni, are all important elements in the progressive acceptance of Kosovo in the international community. These commitments will need to be fully implemented.

The international presence of the United Nations and its partners, in particular EULEX, will help in the achievement of this goal. The Kosovar Government needs therefore to cooperate fully with this international presence, with a view to establishing a Kosovo that is democratic, multi-ethnic and respectful of the rights of minorities.

A new Government was formed in Serbia on 7 July following the May elections, which saw the victory of the democratic and pro-European forces. That Government has made rapprochement with the European Union its priority. To this end, it has taken courageous steps that France and its European Union partners have welcomed. In particular, allow me to cite the conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 22 July 2008 in response to the arrest of Radovan Karadzic:

> "This development illustrates the commitment of the new Government in Belgrade to contribute to peace and stability in the Balkans region. It is a significant step on Serbia's path towards the European Union."

The decision of the Serbian Government to normalize diplomatic relations with all of the countries of the European Union is also a step in the right direction. We encourage the Serbian Government to continue on this course and to develop a constructive approach to the activities of the European Union in order to help uphold peace and security in the Balkans region. We are convinced that Serbia's path towards the European Union, including its candidate status, could be accelerated. France is intending to push hard in this direction during its presidency of the European Union by offering Serbia clear prospects. We believe that it is certain that Serbia will become a member of the European Union; that is its future and our hope.

Allow me to conclude by stressing this point. The European Union is fully aware of its responsibility in helping to resolve the question of Kosovo and in overcoming the obstacles to a stable and prosperous future for the Western Balkans. It is in this spirit that the Union has deployed EULEX and it is in this spirit that we will strive in the months to come to work towards a common future for Serbs and Kosovars within the framework of the European Union.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): Allow me to welcome for the first time to the Council the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, and to wish him every success in his future work, in which we assure him of our full support. I would also like to join others in welcoming the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, as well as the Foreign Minister of Kosovo, Mr. Skender Hyseni, to the Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo on ensuring the peaceful and stable transition from rule under the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to the independent self-governance of a newly established republic. My delegation is pleased to note the positive assessments, in most instances, that were made in report on UNMIK (S/2008/458). By ensuring this smooth transition, the people and the Government of Kosovo have once again proven their democratic maturity and their readiness to build a country that can rightly join others in the united family of European nations. We believe that the success of the recent donors conference will definitely help in achieving that goal.

In addition, in order to ensure this positive trend, it is important to offer and guarantee continuous support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and its deployment throughout the entire territory of Kosovo, as well as the work of UNMIK, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO and other organizations that are helping the people of Kosovo uphold and implement the high standards contained in their new Constitution and related laws and to transform Kosovo into a safe and prosperous European country that will offer a bright future to all of its people and become a valuable and dependable partner to the countries in its region and beyond.

My delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General once again for providing determined leadership and clear guidance that helped in the preservation of stability in Kosovo, and we offer our full support for the reconfiguration of UNMIK, which has enable the European Union to take an increasing role in the rule of law sector, operating under resolution 1244 (1999) and the United Nations umbrella.

Again, we reiterate our strong support for the efforts of the international community to continue bringing peace dividends to the people of Kosovo and

call on both Belgrade and Pristina to continue offering their support for those efforts. As good as the intermediary efforts of the international community can be, the result can only be sustainable and long-lasting if there is genuine support from all sides on the ground to see these goals advanced.

Finally, in an issue that is not directly related to this report, but that also plays an overarching role in the South-East European post-Yugoslav reality, we commend the authorities of Serbia for arresting one of the most wanted indictees and fugitives of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Radovan Karadzic, on 21 July, and look forward to his early transfer to The Hague. We hope that the Republic of Serbia and the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina will redouble their efforts and intensify their cooperation with the ICTY, in order to bring the remaining indictees at large, Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic, to The Hague as soon as possible. That is an important step towards ending impunity for those indicted for serious violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, but also an essential element in realizing the ICTY completion strategy.

Mr. Li Kexin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2008/458). We would like to thank the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, for his briefing. We welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, to the Council; we listened carefully to his statement. We also listened carefully to the statement by Mr. Hyseni.

China's position on the question of Kosovo has been consistent. We respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every country. We have always called for a proper resolution of the question of Kosovo in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We have always maintained that a lasting solution to the question of Kosovo can be found only through negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo aimed at achieving a settlement that is acceptable to both parties.

Over the past five months, the security situation in Kosovo has remained generally calm. However, it is a fragile calm, tinged with tension. Much uncertainty remains. China appreciates the reasonable spirit and the restraint demonstrated by Serbia and Kosovo. We encourage them to carry out practical dialogue in order to solve their problems through diplomatic and political means. They should work together to maintain regional peace and security.

At the same time, challenges still exist in areas such as the reconciliation and integration of different ethnic groups and the return of internally displaced persons, and efforts must be made to protect the legal rights of all ethnic groups. There is no denying that significant changes have taken place in Kosovo compared to nine years ago. However, resolution 1244 (1999), which remains valid, continues to be the legal basis for resolving the Kosovo question.

China has noted the assessment by the Secretary-General and his proposals with regard to the reconfiguration of UNMIK, and we commend him for his efforts. We believe that since UNMIK was established following the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999), its reconfiguration certainly should not stray from the mandate conferred by resolution 1244 (1999). The reconfiguration of UNMIK can only be technical in nature. It must not involve the question of status.

Currently, the Council has not achieved consensus on the Secretary-General's proposal. We hope that the Secretary-General will carefully study the different steps involved in the reconfiguration and the post-reconfiguration mandate and evaluate the various proposals objectively. We hope that he will continue to have close contact with the parties concerned and address their major concerns, so that the issues can be resolved once and for all.

China will continue to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNMIK in carrying out their mandate within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999).

The European Union enjoys significant influence in the Western Balkans. We would like to encourage the European Union to continue to work for the maintenance of regional peace and security. We hope that the European Union, within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), will continue to play a constructive role.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): First of all, let me welcome the Foreign Minister of Serbia, Mr. Vuk

Jeremić, and the Foreign Minister of Kosovo, Skënder Hyseni.

I also wish to welcome the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Zannier, who can count on our support, and I wish him well in this important and challenging task at this very early juncture.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/458), it has been a challenging time for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). As the report states, UNMIK's ability to operate as before and perform functions as an interim administration has been fundamentally challenged due to the actions of both the authorities in Pristina and the Kosovo Serbs. The operational aspects related to the international civilian presence must therefore be adjusted to the new circumstances.

The international presence in Kosovo will continue to operate under resolution 1244 (1999), with the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) under a United Nations umbrella guided by the Special Representative, Lamberto Zannier. The EULEX Mission must perform its expanded responsibilities, as expected, throughout Kosovo, namely, as regards the rule of law. That is in essence the goal that we believe should be pursued.

Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina on the six areas of mutual concern is key to achieving our goals. We are particularly pleased to note that a few days after the new Government was established in Belgrade, the Special Representative was invited to Belgrade to launch and to activate the dialogue. We are confident that Pristina will also participate in that effort and that solutions will be found.

We consider Kosovo a European issue in essence that requires European solutions. An enhanced role for the European Union in Kosovo is fully consistent with our plans to move the country forward towards future membership of the European Union. EULEX is the cornerstone of our strategy. However, let me express our concern about the delays on the reconfiguration of the international presence, which is long overdue and which is affecting EULEX's capacity to perform its duties.

The report states clearly that while the general security situation remains calm on the surface, Pristina's declaration of independence and the entry into force of the Kosovo Constitution and reactions by Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade have increased tensions between Kosovo Albanians and the Kosovo Serb community. To overcome the present situation, we must therefore promptly move forward to enable the European Union, within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), to play an enhanced role through the EULEX Mission.

UNMIK will continue to preserve its significant functions. I am please to note that the report clearly stated that UNMIK will continue its efforts to consolidate democratic government institutions in Kosovo, advance economic growth and moved towards a future in Europe as part of the Western Balkans. In that context, I also wish to emphasize the crucial role to be played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well.

Italy reaffirms its full commitment to contributing to the international effort in Kosovo, to regional stability and to the European future of all the countries in the West Balkans, including Serbia.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): I would like to welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo, to the Council. Mr. Zannier is well qualified to assume this role, and the United States is confident in his ability to consolidate the considerable achievements of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in preserving peace and stability in Kosovo.

Mr. Zannier's role is different from that of his predecessors. His task is more limited: to implement the reconfiguration of UNMIK in accordance with the order of the Secretary-General, rather than to administer Kosovo. Facilitating the reconfiguration is a different, but significant mission. Listening to his briefing, I understand that he appreciates that vital change. He and his staff have the support of the United States as he works to implement the Secretary-General's plan to reconfigure UNMIK.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Rücker, and his deputy, Larry Rossin, for their hard work and significant achievements during their tenure.

I would also like to welcome Foreign Minister Jeremić here today and congratulate Serbia on

demonstrating its commitment to the rule of law through the arrest of Radovan Karadzic. We are also pleased with the tone shown by the Minister here today. The new Serbian Government is making commendable efforts to improve relations with the European Union. We encourage Serbia further to illustrate those gestures by engaging constructively with the European Union on Kosovo.

I would also like to welcome Foreign Minister Hyseni to the Council and congratulate him on his historic appointment as Kosovo's first Foreign Minister and on the progress his Government is making as it charts its new independent course.

Today, I would like to make three additional points. First, this is a time of promise for all the people of Kosovo. The 11 July donors conference in Brussels that the Foreign Minister of Kosovo referred to exceeded expectations, with pledges totalling $1.9 billion. The conference underscored the commitment of key members of the international community to help foster economic growth, support regional stability and encourage prosperity for all the people of Kosovo.

I am pleased to note that, since Kosovo's declaration of independence on 17 February, a Constitution and 41 laws have been adopted, with strong commitments to the protection of minority community rights and religious and cultural heritage, in line with the recommendations of former United Nations Special Envoy Ahtisaari.

Furthermore, three minorities, including two ethnic Serbs, continue to serve as ministers in Kosovo's Government. Ethnic Serbs are active in several of Kosovo's local and central Government institutions. Forty-three countries have recognized Kosovo's independence, and Kosovo has applied for membership in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The Government of Kosovo and the vast majority of Kosovo's citizens of all ethnic groups have shown goodwill and restraint, despite continued provocations by hard-line opponents of Kosovo's independence. The progress and stability in Kosovo have been laudable and should be commended by all members of the Security Council.

Secondly, despite that progress, we share the Secretary-General's concern regarding the continuing lack of control on the Serbia-Kosovo border. Smuggling remains rampant and the threat of violence from hardliners remains worrisome. We call on Serbia to support all authorities in their efforts to restore legitimate customs and other normal border functions. The threat of violence against those who would seek to impose order must cease.

We deplore ongoing efforts by hardliners in Serbia using financial levers and physical intimidation to coerce ethnic Kosovo Serbs not to participate in Kosovo's institutions. We expect that the new Government in Belgrade will halt the destabilizing policies and support legitimate efforts at building reconciliation and stability.

We also share the Secretary-General's concern about the property dispute at the Decane monastery. That issue highlights an important principle as the Government of Kosovo and the international community work to ensure that minority cultural and religious rights are respected. The International Civilian Representative will exercise oversight to ensure that the Government of Kosovo meets its obligations to protect the rights of minority communities and their cultural and religious heritage.

Thirdly, as this Council has remained deadlocked and unable to provide guidance to the Secretary-General regarding UNMIK's future, we welcome and fully support the Secretary-General's announced decision to reconfigure UNMIK in the light of new realities on the ground in Kosovo, particularly as Kosovo's new Constitution has come into force. That decision of the Secretary-General is completely in line with his existing authorities under resolution 1244 (1999). We look forward to quick progress on UNMIK's reconfiguration and its carrying out of the residual functions the Secretary-General has previously outlined. As we have consistently held since a broad international coalition moved to implement the plan of former Special Envoy Ahtisaari, UNMIK must adapt to the new reality of Kosovo's independence and the establishment of the International Civilian Office and the EU's Rule of Law Mission (EULEX).

Specifically, we welcome and fully support the decision of the Secretary-General to authorize the transfer of responsibilities regarding the rule of law from UNMIK to EULEX. EULEX will play a critical role in supporting the development and enforcement of the rule of law throughout Kosovo. It is for that reason that the United States will contribute police and judicial personnel to the EU-led mission. We look

forward to EULEX's early deployment throughout Kosovo and encourage the United Nations and the EU to conclude technical negotiations that would allow for full EULEX deployment as soon as possible. All parties must recognize that the deployment of EULEX throughout Kosovo will help to ensure stability for all ethnicities in Kosovo.

The Council can contribute to the preservation of UNMIK's tremendous legacy of having preserved peace and stability in Kosovo since its establishment in 1999. We call on all Council members to support the Secretary-General as he exercises his authority under resolution 1244 (1999) to guide UNMIK as it makes a key transition in Kosovo. We also ask that Council members support the members of the International Steering Group and the EU as they work to take on the responsibility of international supervision of Kosovo and, by extension, the preservation of UNMIK's positive legacy.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Security Council of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Jeremić, and thank him for his assessment of the situation regarding developments in Kosovo, which we share.

We cannot say the same of the opinions voiced by Mr. Hyseni.

We welcome Mr. Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whose mandate is, of course, determined by the unchanging provisions of resolution 1244 (1999) and not by the wishes of individual members of the Security Council. We thank Mr. Zannier for his briefing and for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). While we take note of that document, we object to a number of its conclusions.

The Russian approach to the situation in and around Kosovo has been consistent. We are convinced that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence and its recognition by a number of States run counter to the norms of international law, above all the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, resolution 1244 (1999) and other decisions of the Security Council. We insist on strict compliance with resolution 1244 (1999), which, as the Secretary-General has repeatedly confirmed, remains in force, and with the UNMIK mandate approved therein by the Security Council. In that regard, we expect the Secretary-General promptly to inform the Security Council regarding the obstacles placed in the way of UNMIK's work by the Kosovo Albanian side. Such actions represent a manifest violation by Pristina of its obligations under the resolution.

We reaffirm our position that UNMIK's reconfiguration is inadmissible without the Security Council's authorization. The Secretary-General has exceeded his authority in these circumstances by intruding into the Council's statutory prerogatives. Russia is concerned by attempts to destroy the format of the international presence in Kosovo established by the Security Council on the pretext that it purportedly does not correspond to altered realities. We discern behind such attempts an endeavour to legalize a structure for implementing the Ahtisaari Proposal that was not approved by the Security Council, but which would in actuality abet the unilateral establishment of the sovereignty of an unlawfully proclaimed construct.

We also consider it inadmissible to seek, on the pretext of reconfiguring UNMIK, to achieve the Mission's departure from the Serb enclaves in southern Kosovo and to curtail its work in other Serb-populated areas of the province. That would lead inevitably to a rise in tensions that could have unpredictable consequences for the situation in the region as a whole. Furthermore, such arbitrary steps complicate even further the implementation of the democratic standards established by the international community and the guaranteed rights and security of national minorities, including the return of Serb refugees and internally displaced persons.

As confirmed in the Secretary-General's report, things are going badly awry in that respect. From January to May, only 49 Kosovo Serbs returned to Kosovo, indicating a downward trend in the number of returnees. The causes of that are the well-known recent political developments in the province, including the illegal proclamation of its independence. Incidentally, that causal link can even be discerned in the report.

The ongoing wanton seizure of land in Kosovo is of the gravest concern. We are outraged by the sabotaging by the Kosovo authorities of the Decane municipality of the Special Representative's decisions regarding the land surrounding the Visoki Dečani monastery. The situation has deteriorated to such an

extent that UNMIK's representative in the municipality has been the target of violent intimidation.

The absence of real progress in upholding the rights and ensuring the security of national minorities, in conjunction with efforts forcibly to integrate the Kosovo Serbs into a quasi-independent State, will only exacerbate the mistrust and inter-ethnic tensions in the province that led to clashes in northern Mitrovica in March. With regard to those sorry events, in its paragraph 7 the report refers to an independent investigation conducted at the Secretary-General's request. We continue to insist that the members of the Security Council be informed of the investigation's findings as soon as possible. Mr. Ban Ki-moon has been giving the Council assurances in that regard, and we expect them to be swiftly fulfilled. It is impossible to understand why the outcome of the investigation should take longer to reach Council members than the investigation itself took.

The Russian Federation entirely understands the European Union's aspiration to play a more robust role in Kosovo affairs, but that aspiration must be met not unilaterally — as is currently the case — but on the basis of resolution 1244 (1999) and with respect for the statutory prerogatives of the Security Council. In that regard, we advocate as essential further consultations by the Secretary-General both with the parties and with all interested members of the international community. We consider that it is important to take fullest possible advantage of the readiness of the Serbian leadership to engage in dialogue with the United Nations with a view to finding a formula for UNMIK reconfiguration that will be acceptable to Belgrade and that can be approved through a Security Council decision. We expect the Secretary-General to play a vigorous and proactive role in this sphere.

In our view, real progress in contacts between the United Nations and Serbia on Kosovo affairs, including on the reconfiguration of UNMIK, would make it possible to substantially ease the situation while remaining on the solid ground of resolution 1244 (1999). We are convinced that a long-term solution to the Kosovo problem can be found only on the basis of the consent of the parties and with full respect for international law and the prerogatives of the Security Council.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Let me join others in thanking Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the current situation in Kosovo and in congratulating him on his new assignment. I wish also to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2008/458). We welcome Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and thank him for his statement. We also welcome Mr. Hyseni to the Council.

While taking into account the evolving situation on the ground in Kosovo, which surrounds the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and affects its role in the interest of maintaining peace and stability, we urge all parties on the ground to continue to work with and cooperate with UNMIK. Resolution 1244 (1999) continues to provide the necessary political and legal framework for UNMIK to discharge its mandate, including the implementation of standards. UNMIK's operational reconfiguration, we understand, is status-neutral. We acknowledge the importance of the Secretary-General's instruction to UNMIK to cooperate with the European Union (EU) in the area of the rule of law, under the overall authority of the United Nations and consistent with the operational framework established under resolution 1244 (1999). For that reason, we want to put emphasis on the establishment of clear links between the EU and the International Civilian Office (ICO) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

It is our understanding that resolution 1244 (1999) still governs Kosovo; thus, any entity working within the region has to fall with the framework of that resolution. In that regard, the Council needs to keep abreast of the activities of the EU and the ICO on the ground, through regular briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and through written reports by the Secretary-General.

We support the continuation of dialogue with Belgrade on issues of mutual concern which we regard as being of crucial importance for the efforts of the United Nations in Kosovo. We are pleased that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General stands ready to engage in discussion and negotiation in an open, transparent and balanced manner in order to develop a dialogue with Belgrade with a view to implementing practical arrangements. However, it is also particularly crucial that such a dialogue also encompass the wider issue of status. Without that, it is

difficult to foresee the possibility of the normalization of the situation on the ground.

It has been Indonesia's position that dialogue and negotiation remain essential to resolving the question of final status, and we welcome the steadfast position taken by Serbia in committing itself to resolving the final status of Kosovo through political and legal means only. By the same token, we call on the parties in Kosovo to embrace the position taken by Serbia. That position will ensure that the region reaps the peace dividend. We believe that the Secretary-General should continue to engage all parties in the region in order to find a mutually acceptable solution in line with resolution 1244 (1999).

We wish to conclude by thanking the Secretary-General and his team for their tireless efforts and all the personnel of UNMIK for their continued dedication in pursuit of peace and security, in line with resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by welcoming His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Skender Hyseni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo. We also welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK); we thank him for his briefing this morning.

Costa Rica knows that Kosovo's declaration of independence has substantially altered the situation, as well as the circumstances in which UNMIK operates, as the Secretary-General notes in his most recent report to the Security Council (S/2008/458). The complex situation in the Balkans over the centuries is not going to be resolved in a period so brief as that in which the United Nations and UNMIK have been playing a role. But it is only right to recognize the contribution that the Organization has made to date in normalizing certain very important aspects of the lives of the peoples concerned. It is also right to observe that history records lengthy periods of peaceful coexistence and tolerance among them.

That is the basis for Costa Rica's support of the Secretary-General's activities to reconfigure UNMIK within the mandate defined in resolution 1244 (1999). We are convinced that the reconfiguration proposed by the Secretary-General and implemented by his Special Representative is the best way, given the current circumstances, to ensure that UNMIK can continue to contribute to the mission entrusted to it by that resolution. It should also be stated that the contributions made by the European Union (EU) and other European bodies and agencies are central pillars in the establishment of a long-term solution to the Kosovo conflict.

The Special Representative's briefing this morning provided a clearer and more detailed picture of the weakened situation of UNMIK and the limitations it faces in carrying out its work, fulfilling its mandate and enforcing its decisions, in the light of the new reality. Costa Rica believes that the Security Council therefore cannot continue much longer to ignore the need for a formal review of the situation and the mandate of the Mission.

Because of its importance from the standpoint of justice, Costa Rica wants to highlight the contribution made this week by the Government of Serbia in arresting the fugitive Radovan Karadzic, who is accused of crimes against humanity committed during the appalling events that took place during the war among Serbs, Bosnians and Croats at the end of the twentieth century. Without doubt, that arrest reflects the guiding principles of the new Government of Serbia, which is a source of gratification to us. It also reflects Serbia's commitment to full integration into Europe.

At the same time, we voice our concern at the availability of large quantities of illicit arms in Kosovo, as noted by the Secretary-General in paragraph 8 of his report. We respectfully but vehemently urge that a solution be speedily found to that problem.

Finally, Costa Rica appeals once again to the parties to look to the future rather than to the past and to begin a process of reconciliation and political dialogue that can resolve the outstanding issues and find a lasting solution that will benefit all the inhabitants of the region.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I would like to welcome Foreign Minister Hyseni in his first appearance before the Security Council. It is important that Kosovo have the opportunity to speak for itself and to present its position on its future and that of the region.

It is very good to see Foreign Minister Jeremić here again. I would like to warmly welcome the constructive approach that he set out to the Council today. There are still some difference between us, but I believe we now have a basis to move towards our common goal of a future in Europe's institutions for Serbia and Kosovo alike. I welcome and take very seriously what Mr. Jeremić said about Serbia's intentions, not least about its future in Europe and the practical steps that his Government has taken towards that goal.

In particular, I would like to warmly congratulate the Serbian Government on the arrest of Radovan Karadzic this week. We had proposed that the Security Council as a whole welcome that hugely important step forward, and we regret that one delegation was not ready to do so. But let me state clearly on behalf of the United Kingdom how warmly we welcome that particular step and that we see it as a very significant advance for Serbia on the road towards Europe. We hope that the Serbian authorities will continue his efforts and complete the process of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, not least by locating and transferring the remaining indictees, Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2008/458) and to welcome Mr. Zannier here as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, again for the first time. We thank him for his informative, timely and very clear briefing.

The Secretary-General informed the Council last month, on 20 June of his decision to reconfigure the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the light of the profoundly changed reality in Kosovo. Whether or not we recognize Kosovo's independence, I do not think anyone can contest the Secretary-General's assessment that UNMIK could no longer perform the vast majority of its tasks as an interim administration. We therefore welcome his instructions to UNMIK to work with other international organizations in Kosovo, notably the European Union and NATO, to effect the efficient reconfiguration of the international presence there. As it is in the interests of maintaining peace and stability in Kosovo and the region, we all share that goal, and I believe that we should all support the Secretary-General in those efforts.

Obviously, the reconfigured international presence will work primarily with the Kosovo Government. We believe that the European Union Rule of Law Mission for Kosovo can and will soon be able to deploy as planned and play its role as envisaged. We look to Belgrade to support its words and actions about peace and stability in Kosovo with actions on the ground.

We noted with interest the Special Representative's dialogue with Belgrade that started this week on the six specific issues identified in the Secretary-General's special report in June (S/2008/354). We believe that the dialogue must be conducted in an open, transparent and balanced manner, in close cooperation and consultation with the authorities in Pristina and with relevant stakeholders. We believe that it can make a useful contribution to determining how Serbia can work with Kosovo and with the international presences there as part of enhancing cooperation among all the countries of the Balkans.

Of course, that dialogue does not represent the beginning of a new negotiation process; the time for talking about Kosovo's status is past. The United Kingdom and many other countries with interests in and commitment to the Balkan region have recognized Kosovo as an independent State, and that is not going to change.

We congratulate the Kosovo Government on the progress made since its declaration of independence in adopting and enacting priority legislation on minority rights and decentralization and on the entry into force of the new Constitution on 15 June. We welcome the outreach efforts by Kosovo's political leaders to the Kosovo Serb communities. We urge them to continue with those efforts. They are very important, and they lay the foundation for the multi-ethnic community in Kosovo that we are all looking for.

I would like to conclude by saying that today, both Mr. Jeremić and Mr. Hyseni looked forward, and that is what this Council should do. We now have a clear path before us towards a more stable and prosperous region increasingly at ease with itself, and I believe that that is the vision behind which the Security Council should unite.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Once again, we welcome the participation of Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Foreign Minister of Serbia, to our Council deliberations. We

also welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and thank him for his briefing. In addition, we welcome the participation of Mr. Skender Hyseni in this meeting.

South Africa has expressed its position on the developments in Kosovo on several occasions in this Chamber. It is not our intention to go over them again today. However, they do inform our position with regard to the Secretary-General's proposal on the reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and his report on the activities of the Mission from 1 March to 25 June 2008 (S/2008/458).

We would like to emphasize the importance of the fact that the current reconfiguration of UNMIK must take place in a status-neutral manner and in line with resolution 1244 (1999), which remains in effect and valid for Kosovo. We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's commitment to executing the reconfiguration in line with that resolution.

We have noted from the Secretary-General's report that UNMIK will cooperate with the European Union under the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and ultimately the United Nations, as prescribed by resolution 1244 (1999). We look forward to future reports of the Secretary-General on developments in that regard.

Finally, we particularly welcome the fact that one of the functions foreseen for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in UNMIK in its reconfigured form is to facilitate dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. We continue to encourage the parties to use this opportunity to resume dialogue in the spirit of reconciliation and with the intent of achieving an amicable long-term political solution.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), to thank him for his briefing and to congratulate him on his appointment. We wish him every success in his new duties. I wish to take this opportunity to commend the work of his predecessor, Mr. Joachim Rücker. I also wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and His Excellency Mr. Skender Hyseni for their respective statements.

We must express our concern at the statement by the Secretary-General, in paragraph 2 of his report (S/2008/458), that

> "the ability of UNMIK to operate as before and perform its functions as an interim administration has been fundamentally challenged owing to actions taken by both the authorities in Pristina and the Kosovo Serbs".

Indeed, Kosovo is at a crossroads. The stability of Kosovo is experiencing dangerous setbacks in which ethnic divisions still hinder our best intentions to implement a solution that is acceptable to all parties, and the wounds remain unhealed.

We are somewhat reassured to learn that, as he indicated on 20 June (see S/PV.5917), the Secretary-General requested his Special Representative to progress with the reconfiguration of UNMIK, as described in his special report (S/2008/354), with a view to preserving what has been achieved, to adapt the mission to a new reality and to tackle the new operational needs in Kosovo as well as others that may emerge.

However, there still remains the problem, also raised by the Secretary-General, that the Security Council has not been able to provide guidance on this issue. The process of separation, however worrying the circumstances in which it has come about may be, is for all intents and purposes irreversible. In the light of this fact, for the Security Council to stand on the sidelines of these developments and others in other parts of the world will only detract from its credibility and could in itself become a destabilizing factor, eroding institutional progress on the ground. With the failure of the Council to endorse a new mandate, the lack of an expiry date for resolution 1244 (1999), the Secretary-General's initiative seems to us to be doubly prudent and reasonable.

While the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo reaffirm their commitment not to resort to force to put forward or defend their arguments, impunity and disregard for human rights still loom large. To forget and to keep silent must not disguise a history that has plunged many innocents into blood and fire. Therefore, the delegation of Panama congratulates Serbia on the arrest of Radovan Karadzic. We view this as a major step towards effectively tackling impunity for crimes against humanity.

The Council must contribute to the correct disengagement of UNMIK, in keeping with the circumstances on the ground, and thus help ensure that cultural identities are expressed in the service of peace and not of war. Consistent with our position that regional organizations must have a central role in resolving the problems in their regions, our delegation hopes that the differences between Serbs and Kosovars, which have been reiterated again today, can be resolved within the European Union, an international organization that offers the best future for both peoples.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to welcome His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Skender Hyseni. We also welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and we thank him for his very valuable briefing to the Council. We also wish to commend the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2008/458).

Before turning to the content of the report, I should like to emphasize the following principles, which are the essential reasons for the presence of UNMIK in Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains the legal framework for UNMIK, and the Security Council is the body with the authority to amend the mandate of the United Nations mission in Kosovo. The United Nations presence in Kosovo is of the utmost importance, at least in the medium term, especially with regard to addressing the problems, easing tensions that may arise and fostering peace and stability in the region.

We are convinced of the importance of the role of regional arrangements in the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. We thus commend the European Union for playing its part in strengthening peace and security in the Western Balkans and for the support that it has provided to the United Nations operation in Kosovo. We believe that the continued cooperation between UNMIK and the European Union in Kosovo should not exceed the legal parameters defined in resolution 1244 (1999) and should take place under the guidance of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Regarding the report of the Secretary-General, we are concerned at the tension that has characterized the past three months, especially in northern Kosovo, to which the Secretary-General refers, when discussing the political and security situation. Nonetheless, we are hopeful that the tension and the violence remain limited to specific areas and we appeal to all parties in Kosovo work constructively with UNMIK to overcome the painful events of the past and look towards a future of tolerance and harmony, with progress and prosperity for all the people of Kosovo.

Kosovo is not the only place in the Balkans where religious and ethnic minorities have coexisted. We urge UNMIK to deploy greater efforts to guarantee the return of displaced persons of all ethnicities, to provide assistance to the displaced and to protect religious and cultural sites. We condemn all actions taken against all such places or against humanitarian workers.

Finally, we urge the Secretary-General to continue negotiations with all the parties concerned and other interested parties in Pristina and Belgrade in order to overcome the challenges that UNMIK may face in Kosovo, with a view to the accomplishment of a noble goal: the maintenance of peace and stability in Kosovo through dialogue.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Viet Nam.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2008/458). I also thank Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his detailed briefing. I welcome the participation in today's Council meeting of His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and of Mr. Skender Hyseni.

My delegation shares the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that recent events in Kosovo have created a profoundly new reality on the ground and pose significant challenges to the ability of UNMIK to exercise its administrative authority as mandated by the Security Council in resolution 1244 (1999). We also note with concern the fact that the Pristina authorities have instituted measures that seek to effectively assume UNMIK's powers, in particular with regard to the application of property and vehicular traffic law. We are also concerned that the so-called constitution makes no mention of any role or function

for the United Nations and does not contain any reference to resolution 1244 (1999), which has so far been the legal framework for the international civil presence in Kosovo and will continue to be so until or unless the Security Council decides otherwise.

Taking into account this radically changed reality and the evolving circumstances in Kosovo, we understand that there is a pressing need for a consensual solution that preserves peace and security in Kosovo, as tension continues to escalate between the Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities, and, more dangerously, as large quantities of illicit arms are available in Kosovo during this sensitive and easily potentially explosive period. We therefore call upon the parties concerned to refrain from making any statement or undertaking any action that would endanger peace, provoke violence or jeopardize security in Serbia, including Kosovo and the region. We also urge both sides to resume dialogue and negotiations towards a comprehensive and lasting solution to the issue of Kosovo in the interests of peace, security and stability in the Balkan region.

Concerning the future of UNMIK, we take careful note of the Secretary-General's package of proposals and share his views that, given a substantially changed situation, UNMIK needs to be adjusted to effectively perform its tasks as an interim administration throughout Kosovo. We hold, however, that any change or reconfiguration of the international civil presence in Kosovo will require a new decision of the Security Council, in conformity with resolution 1244 (1999), as well as the consent of all parties concerned. We hope that the parties concerned will continue to work together with UNMIK, as well as with members of the Security Council and the international community, towards the achievement of a mutually accepted solution to the issue of Kosovo. In that spirit, my delegation commends Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his efforts to engage the parties in dialogue on the practical issues, as shown in his recent introductory meetings in Belgrade with the Foreign Minister of Serbia, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and with Mr. Goran Bogdanović.

We wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm Viet Nam's support for the central role of the United Nations in promoting the dialogue and reconciliation process and in maintaining peace and security in Kosovo and the Balkans.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Mr. Skender Hyseni has asked for the floor to make a further comment. I give him the floor.

Mr. Hyseni: I just want to pick up on a number of points that have been raised.

The first concerns dialogue with Belgrade. We will continue to seek direct talks with Belgrade on a number of issues of mutual interest because the range of such issues is very broad and Pristina would prefer to engage in such talks at an early rather than at a later stage. Of course, Pristina and Belgrade should and can talk as two independent and sovereign States. We have also welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to identify a number of issues for discussion, and we welcome again the facilitation in those discussions of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zannier.

Dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on issues of mutual interest is indispensable because of the ties of the past. I can assure the members of the Council that it is in the very best interests of both Belgrade and Pristina to talk. It is also in the very best interests of the future of both countries as we aspire and work to join the western community of nations as represented in the European Union.

We do not need to wait until we have resolved all disputes, and it does not take recognition on the part of Belgrade to talk about practical issues. We can talk about energy; we can talk about roads; we can talk about all sorts of highways, road networks and transmission lines without being recognized mutually. We are also ready to talk with Serbia on a number of issues that relate directly to the concerns and grievances of the Serb community in Kosovo because we are very committed. There should be no doubt that the Government and institutions of Kosovo will deliver fully on their commitment to protecting minority rights and above all the rights of the Serb community.

That brings me to the issue of the integration of the Serb community into and its participation in the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo. The elections for a number of Serbian municipalities conducted by Belgrade are illegal. Instead, the Government of Kosovo intends to implement in their entirety the decentralization plans and the blueprint for establishing additional Serb-majority municipalities, because in that

way we will enable the members of the Serb community to duly participate in the conduct of public affairs and to decide entirely upon their own affairs. In addition to their own competencies, the Serb-majority municipalities will have additional competencies in the areas of primary, secondary and tertiary health care and education at all levels, from primary to university.

The institutions and all members of the Government of Kosovo will continue to reach out to the members of the Serb community. We take this opportunity once again to invite Belgrade to cease its support for illegal power structures in the North and instead to encourage the members of the Serb community to come forward and work with us for a better future for every single citizen of the Republic of Kosovo. Once again, we urge Belgrade also to open up and be more receptive to our call for the normalization of relations and for a direct dialogue on many issues of mutual and common interest.

The Security Council can rest assured that the Government of the Republic of Kosovo will do everything it takes to protect minority rights — again, above all, those of the Serb minority. We will do everything it takes to protect, restore and honour the cultural and religious legacy and heritage of the Serb community in Kosovo. The Government of Kosovo has allocated resources and efforts to make we sure we do just that. We also have an excellent blueprint in the Ahtisaari annexes for protecting cultural and religious heritage through the establishment of so-called protective zones around the monasteries. That work is under way.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Lamberto Zannier to respond to comments raised at this meeting.

Mr. Zannier: I would just like briefly to refer to one issue raised by Foreign Minister Jeremić in his statement, which has to do with the findings concerning allegations that excessive force was used on 17 March against Kosovo Serb demonstrators in the town of Mitrovica. I wish to inform him that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will organize a briefing for concerned Member States on that issue next week.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.